

Serial No.: 09/971,975

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed 2 January 2003 has been received and considered.

PRIORITY:

Responsive to the request of the Examiner, applicants have amended the specification to correct the reference to the serial number of the priority forming provisional application. In view of this amendment, applicant respectfully submits that the claim under 35 USC 120 is not properly identified.

OBJECTION TO THE CLAIMS:

Applicants have amended claims 1, 8, 13, 16-22, 28, 29, 31 and 32 to adopt the suggestions of the Examiner relative to the use of the term "orthogonal."

With the objective of avoiding a potentially confusing renumbering and amendment of the instant claims, Applicant respectfully requests to defer the renumbering of the claims so as to avoid the remaining problem identified by the Examiner, namely the interposition of an independent claim between a dependent claim and its respective base claim. Pending the Examiner's consideration of the present amendment and specifically the amendment of claims 7, 11 and 23 and in the event the Examiner determines the aforementioned claims to be allowable, Applicant will proceed to amend the claims to rectify the numbering of the claims.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC 102:

Claims 1-12, 14, and 23-34 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) over Stephenson et al. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. As indicated in paragraph 7 of this Action, the

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Examiner has indicated that Claims 16-19 would be allowable provided that these claims were rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the respective base and any intervening claims. Since claim 16 is directly dependent on Claim 1, applicant has amended claim 1 to include the limitations of Claim 16. It follows that Claim 1, as amended, is in fact Claim 16 rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of claim 16 and its base claim. Claim 16 depended directly from claim 1 and therefore there were no intervening claims. Claims 17 and 18 formerly depended from claim 16 and have now been amended to depend from claim 1 as amended. In view of these amendments and the indications of the Examiner, applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 17 and 18 should now be in condition for allowance. Further, applicants respectfully submit that the claims which depend from claim 1, namely claims 2-6, 19-22, and 28-29, should also be allowable for among other reasons the same logic which supports the allowability of claim 1,

With reference to claims 7-12, 14, 23-27 and 30-34 applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. Applicant has amended the aforesaid claims to require the limitation of a belt member disposed over an upper surface of the second floor panel. This belt member is specifically configured for a sliding displacement over the upper surface of the second floor panel responsive to a displacement of the second floor panel relative to the first floor panel. In all the belt member forms a length adjustable second floor surface disposed proximate the first floor surface. Applicant respectfully submits that Stephenson neither teaches nor suggests such a belt member or the orientation of that belt member in the claimed orientation. In view of the absence of such a teaching, applicant submits that claims 7-12, 14, 23-27 and 30-34 define over the art and therefore are in condition for allowance.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC 103:

Claims 13, 20-22 and 35 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) over Stephenson et al in view of Zhou. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. Claims 13, 20-22 and 35, as amended,

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presently require a belt member disposed as indicated above. Applicant submits that neither Stephenson et al or Zhou, either individually or in combination either teach or suggest such a belt member or the orientation of such a belt member in the claimed orientation. In the absence of such a teaching or suggestion, applicant respectfully submits that claims 13, 20-22 and 35 define over the art and therefore, are in condition for allowance.

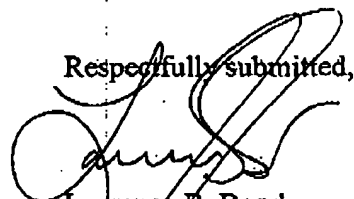
Claim 15 stands rejected under 35 USC 102 and 35 USC 103 over Stephenson et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. Claim 15 depends from claim 1. As noted above Claim 1 has been amended to include the requirement of a belt member which is disposed over the second floor panel. Applicants respectfully submit that Stephenson et al neither teaches nor suggests such a belt member. In the absence of such a teaching, applicants submit that claim 15 presently distinguishes over the Stephenson et al reference and is therefore allowable over that reference.

CONCLUSION:

In view of the amendments indicated above and the arguments advanced, applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims of the instant application are now in condition for allowance.

Reconsideration of the application and the claims thereof is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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